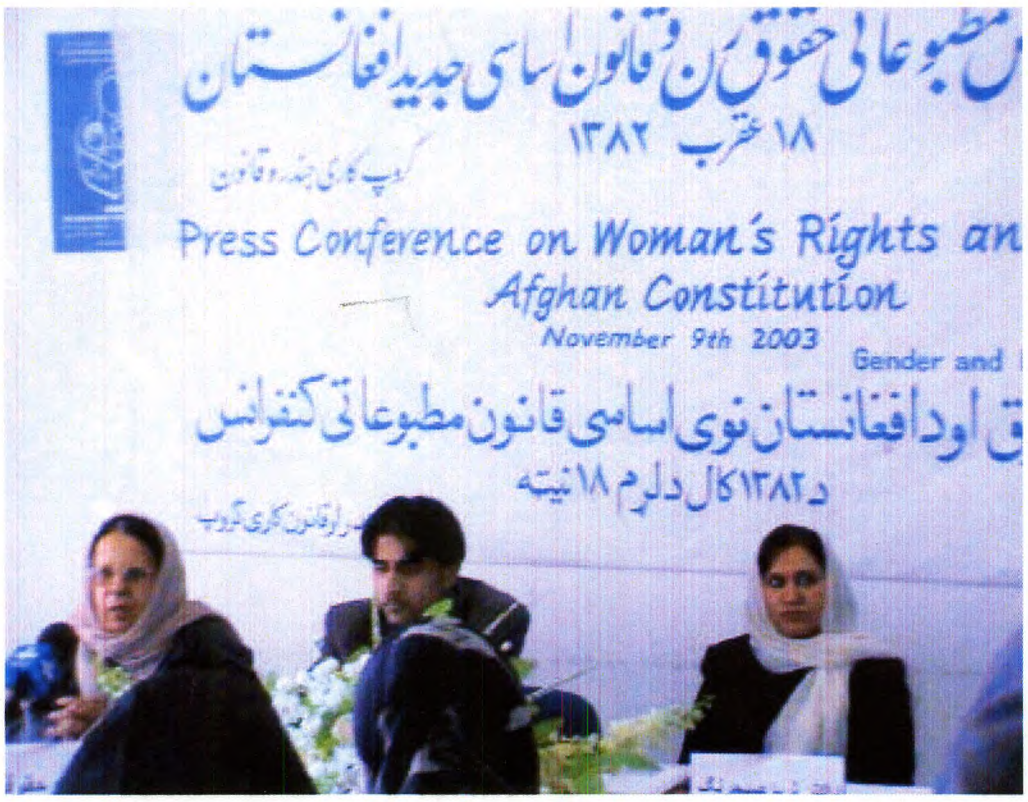
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN (UNIFEM) in AFGHANISTAN UPDATE

Issue 3, November 2003



Professor Mahbuba Hoquqmal, State Minister for Women's Affairs (left) and Dr. Suraya Subhrang, Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs at the Gender and Law Working Group's press conference on November 9.

UNIFEM's new Acting Programme Director.
Ms. Carolyn McCool recently joined UNIFEM as Acting Programme Director. Carolyn has over 20 years experience as a Human Rights lawyer and later in post conflict work including as Director Democratization in Kosovo reporting to the Head of mission in the Organization for Security Coordination in Europe. She brings with her a rich experience in human rights in post conflict situations in a multilateral environment, particularly in governance, institution building and justice. Contact: Tel: 070-285 454, Carolyn.mccool@undp.org

Women's Rights and the Draft Constitution – Developing a Platform for Action

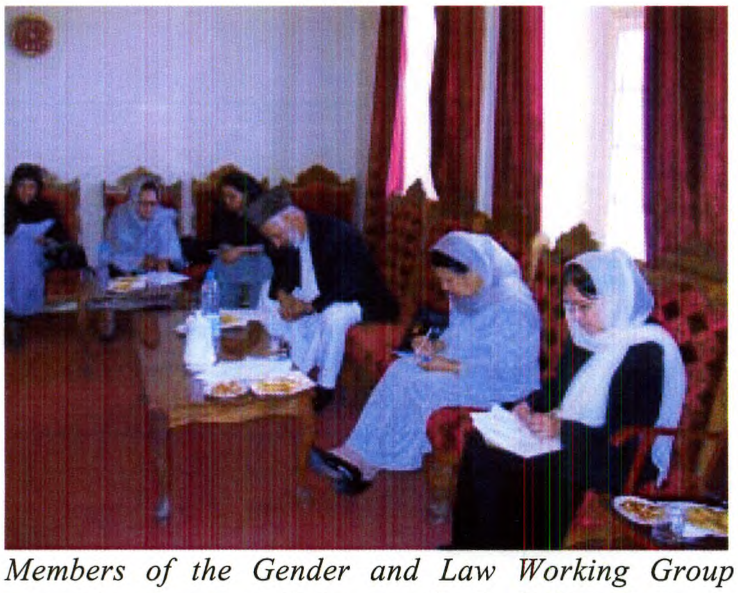
Various groups and organizations moved quickly to review the draft constitution to ensure women's rights are adequately addressed. The Gender and Law Working Group, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, Rights and Democracy, and the International Human Rights Law Group are among the organizations and groups that have developed specific comments on particular articles of the Constitution.

UNIFEM is providing ongoing technical support to the Gender and Law Working Group in this process. The Gender and Law Working Group held a news conference on November 9 2003 to raise its concerns on the draft constitution. The news conference, at the Ministry of Women's Affairs, was attended by a wide range of Afghan and international media. The Group developed recommendations in the form of articles in response to the draft Constitution released on November 2, by President Karzai and the Constitutional Commission. This draft will be sent to the Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ) which will meet in December to ratify Afghanistan's new Constitution.

The draft constitution includes some references to women and to their political participation. It provides for balanced education for women along with minorities, social security for "women without caretakers" and language

referring to wellbeing of mother and child in the provision on family. One woman is to be elected from each province to the lower house of parliament, House of the People (*Wolesi Jirga*), a total of 32 women out of the 210-250 members. For the upper house, the House of Elders (*Meshrano Jirga*), the President will appoint $1/3^{rd}$ of the delegates, half of which ($1/6^{th}$) shall be women.

The Gender and Law Working Group, a forum for women and men legal experts and civil society representatives, chaired by the State Minister for Women Mahuba Hoquqmal, detailed its recommendations in key areas of the constitution, including the preamble, state obligations, human rights and political participation.



Members of the Gender and Law Working Group preparing recommendations on the draft Constitution

The recommendations, formulated with technical support provided by the UNIFEM Gender Justice team, highlight that the draft constitution does not include any references to gender equality or women's human rights, including in the section "aspirations of the Afghan nation' detailed in the preamble. The rights protected in the Constitution are ensured only to citizens, without any specific guarantees for women's equal rights to citizenship. In the light of the devastating injustices against women in the past, the Group also highlights the lack of a provision on positive action by the Government to ensure women are provided with opportunities in all fields of life on the basis of equality with men.

With the convening of the Loya Jirga only days away, the Working Group is continually engaging the media on the specific concerns in the draft constitution in an effort to raise awareness among the general public and, particularly, with potential delegates.

Developing a common Platform of Action

On December 08 the Ministry of Women Affairs, the State Minister of Women Affairs and the Committee for the Defence of Afghan Women's Rights in the Constitution organised a 2 day workshop at Swisspeace. The purpose of the workshop, organised with support of the Government of Germany, was to consolidate recommendations on women's rights for the constitution. This meeting was well attended by a wide variety of civil society and government stakeholders. The messages and recommendations from this workshop will be conveyed to the female delegates of the Loya Jirga.

UNIFEM supports Special Category Elections and Orientation for Women Delegates to the *Constitutional Loya Jirga*

The National Programme Officer for UNIFEM's Gender Justice Programme, Najia Zewari, has been seconded to the Constitutional Commission's Secretariat to assist in the implementation of the Women's Special Category Elections for the Central Area of Afghanistan. The recent elections in Kapisa and Parwan provinces have been successful, particularly in Parwan where around 300 women took part. UNIFEM's Women's Community Development team observed and supported the elections process.

Two members of the Afghan Women Journalists' Forum, a group that is supported by UNIFEM and USAID, have been elected as Kabul Province's women's representatives to the Constitutional Loya Jirga. They are: Ms Suraya Parlika, publisher of the monthly, Faryad-e-Zan (Woman's Shout), and Ms Jamila Mujahid, publisher and editor of the monthly, Malalai.

Elections for all members of the special category of women delegates were concluded recently, allowing time for a special orientation session on issues of concern to women in the Constitution. The UNIFEM Gender Justice team is working with partners to provide technical input on a training manual to be used in the orientation session as well as offering technical expertise in the planning and imple mentation of the sessions.

This technical expertise includes the participation of UNIFEM's recently arrived Gender Advisor on Islamic Jurisprudence in the judicial reform process. The purpose of the orientation sessions for women is to finalize a platform for action to integrate women's human rights provisions into the draft Constitution. The recommendations of the Gender and Law Working Group and others should be a valuable contribution to the formulation of the platform.

UNIFEM is also supporting the general orientation session for all CLJ delegates by seconding two National staff members, Homa Sabri and Najia Zewari, as female trainers and facilitators for the CLJ.

UNIFEM's Gender Justice Program is funded by the Government of Italy. For more information please contact Ms. Najia Zewari (najia.zewari@undp.org)

Women on the Move at the Women and Sport Media Event

A media event was held on 26 October, 2003 to generate public understanding about the importance of sports and physical education to the status of women, and to engage donors and government ministries to support the program.

UNIFEM, through the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) Support Team, assisted the National Olympics Commission (NOC) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) in the event which was held at the Education University Gymnasium, Kabul. This is in line with the on-going effort of UNIFEM to build the capacity of MOWA to catalyze inter-ministerial undertakings in support of women's advancement. The presence of the ICB Support Team in MOWA is primarily funded by the Norwegian government.



Afghan sportswomen demonstrating their netball skills at the media launch.

Attended by around 500 women athletes, donors, NGOs, representatives from government ministries, and sports enthusiasts, the event featured exhibitions of women

athletes in the fields of karate, tae-kwon-do, judo, volleyball, basketball, football and other sports. The events were administered by Sports Sans Frontieres, an NGO working for the promotion of sports in Afghanistan.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs, as the lead ministry for women's advancement, is cooperating with the National Olympics Commission and the Department of Physical Education and Sports to implement a program that will, among others, do the following:

* develop a national policy on women and sports;
* operate a physical education and sports training center for women;
* train women in various sports fields for international competitions;
* train female sports trainers; and;
* conduct an information campaign on women's participation in sports.

The event also featured a policy dialogue which tackled various problems and issues that hinder women's leadership and participation in sports. A policy proposal responding to these problems was drafted by the MOWA policy and planning department with the assistance of MICB-ST. The draft was taken up in a multi agency meeting held on 2 December at the MOWA.

UNIFEM's "Support to the Ministry of Women's Affairs" project is funded by the Governments of the UK, Netherlands, Denmark, Canada and Belgium. For more information, please contact Monema Said Fakhrudin of MOWA Policy and Planning Department at 070-298-985 or Ermie Valdeavilla of MICB-ST at ermie.valdeavilla@undp.org



The Minister of Women's Affairs, Dr. Habiba Sarabi with members of a female Judo Team.

Afghanistan marks International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

The Ministry of Women's Affairs organized a series of events over a 16 day period to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Events and activities included a workshops held in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, roundtable discussions, role playing on TV and preparation of banners, logos and posters to raise awareness of issues related to violence against women.

The Minister of Women's Affairs, Dr. Habiba Sarabi, said: "As Afghanistan is a part of the international community and our women are the most vulnerable members of the society, it is very important for us to hold the conference on the elimination of violence against women."

UNDP and UNIFEM, through the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) Support Team, supported these events.

Conducting Gender Research in Afghanistan

Although it is widely recognized that over two decades of conflict have produced long-term consequences for the political economy of the country, exposing livelihoods at the local level to multiple sources of vulnerability, the gender effects of these transformations are, as yet, poorly understood.

To address this gap UNIFEM is currently conducting a study to examine the gender dimension of livelihood options for Afghan women and men. In doing so UNIFEM is developing an appropriate methodology for data collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data. This is intended to inform policy makers about the gender dimension of livelihoods and to make a significant input into monitoring and evaluation of livelihood programmes that are in operation.

The livelihoods studies were conducted in:

* Women-targeted projects that support women's capacities for income generation and were carried out in Kabul at WFP bakeries, CARE's HAWA projects and UN Habitat's Community Fora. Multiple strategies were used to gather data, including focus groups, key informant interviews and semi-structured interviews with individual women.

* Rural areas of Badakhshan, Herat and Laghman in collaboration with the EC-funded Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) project on rural livelihoods. We worked with NGO partners to carry out the surveys. The survey was a lengthy questionnaire containing structured and semi-structured questions.

Lessons learned from surveying women

Problems of field surveys in Afghanistan vary between urban to rural areas. Urban surveys are the simplest logistically and with regard to security issues. But urban surveys on Afghan households are problematic in that women may be reluctant to speak to surveyors. Generally people assume that by being interviewed, their chances of being placed on a program are increased. They often exaggerate their poor economic situation to gain sympathy and benefits.

Surveys in rural areas have problems of logistics, security and staff, but the actual data collection once in the field is much easier. Security can be an issue, as with Laghman where the survey was postponed several times because of local fighting. Women generally enjoy having someone new come to their homes and have many questions for the interviewers. They also expect to gain something from an interview and may send a child to bring the survey team to their home so

that they can be placed on a "list" for services.

The biggest problem in trying to conduct surveys in Afghanistan is that it can be hard to find competent local surveyors, particularly in rural areas. It is also rare to find couples (women and men) who are both competent surveyors. Especially in rural areas, women have to be accompanied by a male family member. This means that an escort has to be hired. If he is also a competent surveyor, this is even better. But it is not easy to find couples with these skills.

Training of the surveyors can be time consuming as education and experience vary a great deal. It is almost impossible to find surveyors who also speak English. Most surveyors are educated to the 10th or 12th class. They need more time to really understand the purpose and goals of the survey, why questions are being asked and how best to ask them. They also need time in the field to practice the survey.

For consistency of data collection one needs to have a well-trained team from Kabul that will travel to each region. These surveyors can be paired with locally trained staff who know local dialects and customs. Because well trained surveyors are critical to the success of a survey, this is another reason for hiring one or two pairs of surveyors and using the same teams in all areas.

This research is being prepared by Prof. Deniz Kandiyoti of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London and Dr. Patricia Omidian UNIFEM's research coordinator in cooperation with Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). The study is expected to be released in March 2004.

For more information about UNIFEM's Gender Analysis of Livelihoods study please contact Patricia at patricia.omidian@undp.org or call 070 274 828.

Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Central Statistics Office form Inter-ministerial Working Group on Gender and Statistics

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) and the Central Statistics Office recently formed an inter-ministerial Working Group on Gender and Statistics (WGGS) to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of an Action Plan on Mainstreaming Gender in Statistics. The plan was developed and adopted during a training and planning workshop last July with the help of UNIFEM and the UN Economic and Social Commission on Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It contains specific measures to be undertaken by various ministries to ensure that gender responsive data are collected and used in government planning.

The Working Group is supported by a Secretariat headed by MOWA Statistics Office, with membership from the Ministry of Planning and the Central Statistics Office. The WGGS held its first meeting on November 5 2003 where it approved its Terms of Reference and recommended ways of implementing the specific components of the Action Plan on Mainstreaming Gender in Statistics. It held a gender induction seminar on December 9-11 to ensure that its members understand the rationale, principles and approaches in mainstreaming gender in statistics.

Both MOWA and CSO had established their respective gender and statistics taskforces to coordinate the compilation of statistics on women. MOWA is collecting data for the preparation of sectoral situationers on women, particularly on health, education, economic empowerment and legal protection.

For more information, please contact Golochotai Azimi of MOWA Statistics Office or Ermie Valdeavilla of MICB-ST at ermie.valdeavilla@undp.org

Afghan Women Journalists' 2nd National Conference 12-13 October 2003, Kabul

The conference, organised by the Afghan Women Journalist's Forum, was attended by more than 170 - an increase of 87% compared to the first conference in June. The participants included 91 women journalists from across Afghanistan- a 75% increase. Several delegates who had been invited from the provinces could not come to Kabul because of security concerns that made it difficult for them to leave their families behind.

Speakers included the Dean of Kabul University's Faculty of Journalism, Dr Mohhammad-Kzzem Ahang; leading journalists from Afghanistan's press and radio and television; the Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs, Ms Najiba Sharif; the Deputy Minister of Information and Culture, Mr Abdol-Hamid Mobarez; members of the Constitutional Review Commission, Ms Fatima Gailani and Ms Parwin Majruh, and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission's Ms Shafiqa Habibi. The conference reviewed:

* Women's contribution to journalism in Afghanistan, since the publication of the first women's newspaper, *Ershad-e-Naswan* (Women's Message), in 1920;
* Women's image in the media in Afghanistan and other countries;
* Freedom of expression in Afghanistan;
* Women's rights and Afghanistan's new constitution;
* The use of language and literature in the media.

In their evaluation forms, the delegates gave their highest praise to the sessions on women's rights, the constitution and freedom of expression. Their suggestions for future conferences included:

* Inviting women journalists from other countries as guest speakers;
* Inviting disabled women to the conference;
* Organising discussions on: Women's unemployment; Women's education; Children's rights.

Following the conference, the women journalists from the provinces, members of the Afghan Women Journalists' Forum and the UNIFEM Gender and Media team attended a reception at the Ministry of Information and Culture. The Minister, Dr Said-Makhdoom Raheen, said it was remarkable that while only two years ago Afghan women were not allowed to speak out in public, there were now hundreds of women working as journalists across the country. Dr Raheen thanked the AWJF and UNIFEM, saying, "Without your support, these ladies would not have been here now."

The Forum's 3rd conference was held on December 7 and 8. Details in the next issue.

UNIFEM has been produced a weekly bulletin, *Women in the News*, a compilation of reports and articles by or about women from the Afghan press. To subscribe please email: hossein.shahidi@undp.org or halima.safi@undp.org






Left to right: Jamila Omar, Farida Pahtin, Suraya Rahmati, Najiba Moram, Homaira Rouhi, Fatima Gailani, Najiba Sharif

Strengthening Networks and Standards for Women Centres in Afghanistan

Government representatives from provinces, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) Deputy Minister, Provincial MOWA representatives, NGO key members, donors, business women, media representatives, and executive committee members from different provinces met on 15th October for a workshop on Strengthening networks and standard for Women's Development centers (WDCs) in Afghanistan. The workshop was designed to encourage all the participants to explore these ideas and consider what the best way forward for all the centers.

Women's Centers have become a strategically important response to the sufferings, deprivation and isolation of women in Afghanistan over many years. In many provinces, there are now different kinds of meeting places for women: forums, women's development councils, women's development centers and women's groups and subcentres. Some of the women's development centers have a close collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs or other ministries. Others have developed through business enterprise or training. All of them are contributing to developing opportunities for women and helping women to move forward as leaders and shapers of Afghanistan society.

Recommendations from the Conference

How can we develop a specific strategy for women's centers will support women in socio-economical issues?

* WDCs should have income earning systems in order to be independent and fund their projects themselves.
* Long term credit systems should be established for women who have professional skills and for those women who have learnt a skill newly.
* Enterprises and cooperatives should be established for women.
* Training centers should be established for literate women with long term courses on management, computer sciences, and administration. There should also be vocational centers for illiterate women.
* Establish a network to organize all the activities done for women's development.
* Train women in production and give them professional trainings regarding marketing, and quality & quantity control.

How can we improve collaboration of ministries, local government and executive committee role?

* WDCs' staff should be multi-ethnic, from governmental and non-governmental organizations, women leaders and executive committees.
* Having positive relationships with governmental organizations, religious leaders, and local leaders.
* Implement projects for women according to the needs of women as long term projects until they reach sustainability.
* Men should be allowed to participate in implementation of projects for women.
* Production facilities or factories should be established for women.

UNIFEM's outreach into the provinces project is funded by the governments of Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Britain and Canada. For more information, please contact Dr. Linda Hitchcox (linda.hitchcox@undp.org) or Aslia Wardak (asila.wardak@undp.org)

UNIFEM supported Events and Publications

Upcoming UNIFEM's supported events

Report Title	Implementing Partner	Date
Third Afghan Women's Journalist Forum	AWJF	7-8 December
Training Female CLJ Candidates	Constitution Commission, UNAMA, UNDP, NGOs	December 5-10
Trade Fair in India	AWBC and MoC	November 2003
Women's Entrepreneurial Training Programme. ILO,Turin, Italy	Italian Embassy, ILO, AWBC	November 15-December 09
Gender and Statistics Seminar	MOWA/CSO	9-10 December

Recent UNIFEM's supported reports

Report Title	Language/s	UNIFEM contact
Conference Report from Strengthening Networks and Standards for Women's Centres (October 2003)	English and Dari	Dr. Linda Hitchcox linda.hitchcox@undp.org or Aslia Wardak asila.wardak@undp.org)
Conference Report: Women's Rights and Islam (implemented by MOWA)	English and Dari	Najia Zewari najia.zewari@undp.org
Support to the Elimination of Violence Against Women in Afghanistan (November 2003)	English, Dari and Pashtu	Helen Brereton Helen.brereton@undp.org
Report from the 2nd Afghan Women's Journalist Association (October 2003)	Dari	Hossein Shahidi hossein.shahidi@undp.org
Gender Justice Project Document (October 2003)	English and Dari	Najia Zewari najia.zewari@undp.org
Women in the News – weekly bulletin	English	Hossein Shahidi hossein.shahidi@undp.org
Report from International Women's Day – March 2003	English, Dari and Pashtu	Hossein Shahidi hossein.shahidi@undp.org